

Message Text

SECRET

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S E C R E T JIDDA 8431

EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS CHUSMTM DHAHRAN

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, MARR, SA,US
SUBJECT: UTILIZATION OF US PERSONNEL IN SAUDI AIRLIFTS TO SYRIA

REF: A) STATE 298990
B) USDAO JIDDA 0950
C) USDAO JIDDA 0959

1. AFTER DISCUSSIONS WITH CHUSMTM BG AHMANN AND LOCKHEED
C-130 PROJECT MANAGER FOR SAUDI ARABIA ERNEST DEGRAW WE
CAN REPORT FOLLOWING SYNOPSIS OF C-130 PROGRAM.

2. THERE ARE CURRENTLY A TOTAL OF 28 C-130 AIRCRAFT IN
SAUDI ARABIA, FOUR (4) OF WHICH ARE TANKERS DESIGNATED
AS KC-130. IN 1977, TEN MORE ARE SCHEDULED FOR DELIVERY,
OF WHICH TWO (2) WILL BE TANKERS. THE TANKERS ARE USED
FOR AIR-TO-AIR REFUELING OF RSAF F-5 JET FIGHTERS. ONE
OF THE 28 AIRCRAFT IS CONFIGURED AS A VIP AIRLINER AND IS
USED EXTENSIVELY BY KING KHALID AND OTHER MEMBERS OF
THE ROYAL FAMILY FOR TRAVEL WITHIN THE KINGDOM AND IN
THE MIDDLE EAST.

3. THE BALANCE OF THE C-130 AIRCRAFT ARE USED AS AN
AIRLINE FOR THE SAUDI MILITARY, CARRYING MILITARY
DEPENDENTS IN ADDITION TO CARGO AND ARMED FORCES PER-
SONNEL INSIDE THE COUNTRY AND NEIGHBORING ARAB STATES.

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FROM TIME TO TIME, THE PLANES ARE USED TO FLY MILITARY

SUPPLIES FROM ENGLAND AND WESTERN EUROPE AND THE U.S. OCCASIONALLY THEY ARE USED TO ALLIEVIATE COMMERCIAL CARGO BACK LOGS OF SAUDI ARABIAN AIRLINES.

4. SPECIFICALLY THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THESE FLIGHTS: ACCORDING TO DEGRAW, THERE ARE 27 US CITIZENS INVOLVED IN ACTUALLY FLYING IN THE AIRCRAFT. THE BREAKDOWN: AT JIDDA 6 PILOTS

2 LOAD MASTERS

2 FLIGHT ENGINEERS

AT RIYADH 8 PILOTS

4 LOAD MASTERS

5 FLIGHT ENGINEERS

THE AMERICANS ARE PRIMARILY INVOLVED IN TRAINING SAUDI PERSONNEL AND FLYING CARGO WITHIN THE KINGDOM, THOUGH THEY HAVE ON OCCASION BEEN USED FOR FLIGHTS ABROAD. DEGRAW SAYS THIS IS NOT REPEAT NOT OFTEN BECAUSE SAUDI PILOTS ACTIVELY SEEK THE TRIPS OUTSIDE THE KINGDOM FOR SHOPPING AND R&R PURPOSES.

5. REGARDING REF A PARA 4. WE UNDERSTAND THE SENSITIVITY OF US PERSONNEL INVOLVEMENT IN THESE FLIGHTS, HOWEVER WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THAT WE MAKE A DEMARCHE TO RSAF OR TO SAG MINDEF PRINCE SULTAN IN ORDER TO PRECLUDE FUTURE US PARTICIPATION IN OUT-OF-COUNTRY FLIGHTS. FIRST THIS WOULD HAVE DAMAGING IMPACT ON USG-SAG RELATIONS. THE RSAF RELIES HEAVILY ON THE US PERSONNEL TO OPERATE THE C-130'S BECAUSE OF THE CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF TRAINED AND EXPERIENCED SAUDI PERSONNEL. THE NET EFFECT OF WITHDRAWING THE AMERICANS WOULD AT THE LEAST BE A SERIOUS INCONVENIENCE AND WOULD REDUCE THE OPERATING CAPACITY OF THE C-130 OPERATION. IT WOULD IRRITATE SULTAN ALSO, WITH WHOM WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH RECENTLY REGARDING THE IN-COUNTRY ROLE OF OTHER US MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAMS. IN ADDITION SUCH A DEMARCHE WE DO NOT BELIEVE IS NECESSARY. DEGRAW IN HIS TALK WITH US EMPHASIZED HOW RARE IT WAS FOR AMCIT PERSONNEL TO BE ASSIGNED TO SUCH FLIGHTS. HE ALSO INDICATED AN AWARENESS OF THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS SUCH FLIGHTS COULD CAUSE LOCKHEED IN THE U.S. AND ALSO THAT AT THE LOCAL MANAGERIAL LEVEL STEPS COULD BE TAKEN

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TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. WE RECOMMEND THEREFORE THAT FOR THE TIME BEING WE CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE ISSUE BUT THAT WE DO NOT TAKE IT UP WITH THE SAG.
HORAN

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEE.

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NNN

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